

June 5, 2020

**To:** Employment First and Vocational Rehabilitation Stakeholders

**From:** Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator and Keith Ozols, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation  
(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

We have all experienced a tremendous amount of change as we've responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and put in new policies and practices to protect the health and well-being of our staff, providers and the people we serve.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) remain committed to supporting employment for people with disabilities and doing everything possible to support people who want to work in the community. If a person wants to return to work, or look for a new job, that should be supported. Some people have been working throughout the pandemic, and they should continue to have the supports they need to be successful. Safety remains a top priority, and making sure the worker is protected as appropriate for their job.

As a reminder, VR is doing [remote intakes](#) and continues to place people in jobs and support job retention. VR had more than 90 new job placements in April and May, and more than 280 people closed successfully with stable employment. There is also a [guide for applying for VR services](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. VR has a [COVID-19 web page](#) with resources and information for providers, employers and people receiving services. You can subscribe to receive updates when new information is posted.

ODDS also has a COVID-19 web page with information for providers, case managers, individuals and families. Specifically, there is a new [tool](#) for helping a person make an informed choice on returning to work and other activities. There are also a variety of other tools for people, including a template for [Lifecourse Star](#), an example of a [Lifecourse Star for COVID-19](#), a template for [Lifecourse Trajectory](#), an example of [Lifecourse Trajectory for COVID-19](#), and an [animated video](#) on reopening.

In addition, VR and ODDS continue to collaborate on capacity-building efforts. As people return work, helping to expand provider capacity, especially in rural areas, remains vital to Employment First efforts. Part of building capacity of rural areas is

recruiting more Personal Support Worker job coaches. To help with this effort, ODDS recently developed a [guided enrollment tool](#) for PSWs to learn how to enroll as job coaches.

Thank you for supporting Oregonians with disabilities in their journeys to employment and independence.

Acacia and Keith